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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicants : Mitsuru TAKAI et al.

Group Art Unit: ~~2841~~ 2624

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10/22/06  
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Appln. No. : 10/084,177

Examiner: Hadi AKHVANNIK

Filed : February 28, 2002

Conformation No.: 4788

For : NEXT PROCESS-DETERMINING METHOD, INSPECTING METHOD  
AND INSPECTING APPARATUS

**COMMENTS ON STATEMENT OF REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE**

Commissioner for Patents  
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office  
Customer Service Window, Mail Stop Issue Fee  
Randolph Building  
401 Dulany Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

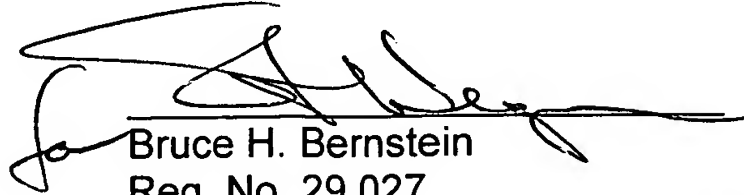
Sir:

In response to the Notice of Allowability, mailed by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on July 28, 2006, and to the Statement of Reasons for Allowance attached thereto, Applicants wish to clarify the record with respect to the basis for the patentability of claims in the present application. While Applicants do not disagree with the Examiner's indication that certain identified features are not disclosed by the references, Applicants submit that each of the claims in the present application recite a particular combination of features, and that the basis for patentability of each of these claims is based on the totality of the particular features recited therein.

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Should there be any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,  
Mitsuru TAKAI et al.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bruce H. Bernstein", written over a horizontal line.

Bruce H. Bernstein  
Reg. No. 29,027

October 27, 2006  
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